

National Hot Rod Association Supercharges Production Workflow, Preserves Historic Footage, Expands International Reach and “Drives” Efficiencies Using Sony’s Intelligent Media Services

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National Hot Rod Association (NHRA), the largest motorsports sanctioning body in the world, recently came to Sony with a simple request – to increase the value of their production assets and use them to support enhanced storytelling. According to Mike Rokosa, the NHRA’s technology executive, the organization sought to reach more consumers on more devices with more content, in a faster manner. He found that Sony “had, or partnered with other entities to provide all of the pieces of the puzzle that would allow NHRA to maximize fan engagement and create new fans.”

After initial discussions, the NHRA realized the value in Sony’s resources and expertise and appreciated their common vision to develop and jointly design solutions that streamline workflows and address growing content needs. After learning more about Sony’s range of production capabilities, the NHRA chose to transition to cloud-based distribution workflows using Sony’s Intelligent Media Services, many of which were created or customized to meet NHRA’s specific needs. Now, NHRA has expanded into a content factory through their implementation of Sony’s turn-key technology, which Rokosa commented “allow us to invest in and broaden the NHRA’s assets, as opposed to building our own hardware.”

To go to an NHRA race is an experience unlike any other. A general admission ticket gives you full access to the pits, allows you to interact with the racers and crew and view 10,000 horsepower funny cars and dragsters that shake your bones to the core as they race down the track at speeds of up to 339 miles per hour. Working hand-in-hand with Sony, NHRA is now able to preserve, digitize and share archival footage, publish real-time video updates for social fans and bring a new pipeline of content to on-demand viewers, bringing the thrill of an NHRA race to fans anywhere, anytime.

Through Memnon’s digitization and archival capabilities, NHRA has found what Rokosa believes is “a viable and cost-effective solution” to preserve valuable content from their over 50 years of historical assets that he says “doesn’t add extra infrastructure or support.” Once this analog content has been digitized via Memnon, it can be housed in Sony’s collaborative Ci Media Cloud platform for secure access and simple sharing from virtually anywhere. NHRA is also working with Ven.ue to re-launch their OTT platform to deliver a steady and robust stream of engaging, monetizable content to their on-demand audience.

Memnon

NHRA came to Memnon with over 36,000 analog assets which needed to be digitized in order to protect and unlock the potential of this historical content – some of which has never seen the light of day. If kept too long these important records of the NHRA’s entire history could deteriorate, get lost or become obsolete due to changing formats and technologies. Through the use of Memnon, NHRA now has a fascinating record of the stories, interviews and footage associated with their rich legacy. They’re also saving space by hosting everything for ubiquitous access in the cloud. This creates new storytelling opportunities which have the potential to be monetized through Ven.ue to open up a new revenue stream, which can cover the costs associated with digitization.

While Memnon hadn't previously worked in the 2-inch realm, they adapted their technology to accommodate the dozens of 2-inch tapes that NHRA had in their archives, as they continue to support new formats based on user request. After Memnon digitizes the content it can live in Ci.

Ci

Rokosa noted, "Sony is one of the leaders in cloud-based systems and our organization saw Ci as an opportunity to work collaboratively across various unique racetrack locations in real-time, enhancing our productivity." With the adoption of Ci Media Cloud, NHRA has positioned itself as the leader among major sports organizations leveraging the cloud for end-to-end media management. Rokosa said, "NHRA is small administratively when compared to larger leagues, so we have to be more agile, more creative and more entrepreneurial in how we compete. Sony is giving us that edge with a cloud-based infrastructure optimized for immediate sharing, publishing and distributing."

The collaborative cloud platform will enable NHRA's expected 5TB of data per event and 120TB of content a year to be tagged with rich custom metadata that is easily searchable. Uploaded files can be shared securely and easily through Ci's MediaBox feature with broadcast and social media teams for posting with immediacy.

Housing both current production assets and archival footage in the cloud gives NHRA a competitive advantage that enables them to edit in the cloud and share in an instant. For the broadcast elements, EVS replay operators will clip highlights from various cameras and those files and their related metadata will be pushed over to a NAS farm and automatically uploaded to Ci. Now everyone in NHRA's production pipeline will have access to their content, regardless of their location, which meets one of the organization's fundamental challenges. Once this content is in Ci, it can be packaged and staged for Ven.ue.

Ven.ue

Rokosa explained that NHRA had worked previously in OTT, but collaborating with Ven.ue allowed the organization to go back to the drawing board and approach their operations strategically and with foresight. According to Rokosa, Ven.ue would allow NHRA to "progress and move forward with minimal infrastructural costs and personnel."

Through Ven.ue, NHRA's content will be customized, published and monetized, creating expansion opportunities, as well as international visibility for NHRA – which satisfies NHRA's core goal. As the first professional sports association to use Ven.ue, the organization will build a customized OTT platform for NHRA, in addition to VOD opportunities which offer new revenue streams. Ven.ue extends the NHRA's reach to additional delivery and distribution platforms and fulfills the fans' desire for additional content. Rokosa noted that the organization would use these new platforms to drive fan engagement and create a new base of loyal NHRA fans.

As Rokosa said, "NHRA and Sony found each other at the right time and in a way that worked for both of us." Through the use of Sony's complementary and inter-connected media solutions, the organization is streamlining efficiencies that enhance their workflow while generating more engaging content for their enthusiastic fans – something any sports organizations would benefit from. As motorsports continue to grow exponentially and find creative avenues to interact with their dedicated supporters, NHRA has new and immersive opportunities to tell relevant stories through videos and social media experiences that enhance fan involvement and in turn, add new dimensions to the sport and its leading talent.

Rokosa observed, "The fact that Sony has some of the best cameras in the world and an enormous stake in the consumer market offers us the ability to continue to grow our relationship into the future and we're looking forward to it."